

Impact Statement *Don DAMOND*

How do I express the impact the loss of my beloved, my dearest friend, my future wife to be, has on me in 3-5 minutes?

How do I sum up the pain and trauma of these last 23 months in this brief proceeding?

How can I provide this court the impact of a lost future, what would have potentially been 30-40 years filled with love, with family, with children full of joy and laughter?

I cannot except to say that the day of July 15, 2017 was the last time I felt a sense of happiness, a sense of trust that things would turn out ok.

When I met Justine, I knew she was my soul-mate. It was a recognition of someone I knew so well but had only just met.

For my part today, I prefer to read a letter to Justine, rather than to the court.

Dear Justine,

I miss you so much. Every day. Every moment. I don't understand how such a thing could have happened to you, to us. We both lived with our hearts opened, caring for others. Loving you had my heart grow in ways I did

not know it could. As we fell in love, suddenly all the Rumi poems made perfect sense. He wrote these for us, for our true love.

My heart aches every day. I miss waking up next to you. So many mornings, the first thing out of your mouth would make me laugh. I miss your wittiness. I miss your muppet-like way of being in the world. You were so light, so silly, giving me and others permission to do the same.

I miss going to bed with you at night. Snuggling before bed, sharing what we were grateful for before going to sleep.

I miss your bright intelligence, always knowing the correct thing to do.

I miss your deep wisdom that provided me guidance when I was confused.

You were able to see the beauty in things so often missed by others. You saw the natural beauty, the intelligence in all of nature. You saw the other world as this world, rightly seen.

And I miss the way you paused and then with a gasp of fascination, marveled at the simple things we all take for granted. A squirrel, a chipmunk, snow falling, the beauty of each season. You reminded me to remember, to be present for it all.

We made our house a home, filled with joy and laughter. I am so sorry I had to sell our house that contained all our memories. Every time I went in that alley, I saw you, walking barefoot, in your pajamas, toward that police car. Toward that unexpected and violent death. In my mind, I beg you to turn around. Every day, I had to drive past the place you took your last breaths. I just couldn't stay. The trauma was too much for me to bear.

Every Saturday for the first year after you died, at 11:39pm, the exact time we had hung up the phone, I walked down to the end of that alley, just as you did. I would light a candle just so you could see me. I sat in the spot you died, I looked up at the street light above me, knowing that was the last thing you saw. I would leave back toward the house, wishing you too, had been able to walk back toward the house, after speaking with the officers.

I want you to know that I don't go to that spot any longer. I can't even drive past that place. It hurts too much. My heart starts to ache, my pulse quickens. My breath shortens. I want to remember how you lived, not where you were murdered.

I saw your wedding dress for the first time, a week after you died. I got to touch it as I cried, alone in the shop where you purchased it. I had an experience of what that magical wedding night in Hawaii would have been

like. I fantasized about seeing you walk on that beach, toward me to exchange our vows. I fantasized about kissing you, as they designated us Man and Wife. But these are not memories but sad wishes of what will never be.

Our plans to conceive a child in Egypt fall of 2018 would have meant this baby would have soon been born. Any day now, we would have been parents. You were the stepmom to my only son. Zach loved you and knew you loved him deeply. You were there for him in a way no one had every been. So much taken away in a single violent moment.

I wish I could have said goodbye to you. To have held you as your breath slipped away. I would have whispered that I love you and that it was going to be ok. I wish you could have seen my eyes looking lovingly at you as you died. But I didn't get to say goodbye, to hug you one last time. You died on a slab of concrete, surrounded by strangers, some of whom did not care about you one bit.

I am sorry I told you to call the police. I believed they would help you, and help that woman in distress. It was at my direction that you summoned your murderer. I have to live with that for the rest of my life. Me, my son, my mother have a life sentence of living without you.

I don't know that I will ever love again. And I know I won't love like this. I don't understand why such a thing would happen. How ones uncontrolled fear can result in your unjust and violent death. You didn't deserve that. Our families don't deserve this. But I will always love you. We dedicated a park bench at the exact location we professed our love for the first time, near the creek. On that bench is inscribed "Love is Never Lost." This is True. But life is lost. Your life is lost, Part of my life forever lost. I love you and I will miss you forever
Justine.

A handwritten signature in black ink, featuring a large, stylized 'J' and 'S' followed by a cursive 'm'.